

Testimony submitted by:

Ben Daigle, MPA

Public Policy Chairperson, Board of Directors

National Alliance on Mental Illness – Connecticut Chapter (NAMI-CT)

241 Main Street - 5th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106

NAMI-CT Public Policy Committee – Public Hearing Testimony

Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee

Legislative Office Building Room 2C, 5:00 PM, Thursday, February 11, 2010

H.B. No. 5018: AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2011

Founded in 1984, the *National Alliance on Mental Illness – Connecticut Chapter (NAMI-CT)* is Connecticut's largest member organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. NAMI-CT's *Public Policy Committee* is a diverse group of individuals, families, healthcare professionals, and other allies united by the understanding that more effective and better integrated systems of treatment and support services will have social and fiscal benefits not only for people whose lives are directly affected by mental illness, but for the entire state of Connecticut.

It is well-documented that the implementation and promotion of effective social supports is a wise investment because such supports prevent far greater costs and social burdens in the future. In this regard, **socially and fiscally, H.B. 5018 represents a step in the wrong direction.**

Even the most seemingly modest barriers to access have been shown to significantly hinder people's adherence to their approved treatment regimen, and lead to higher than necessary costs. **Access to the right medication can determine whether a person lives a productive life or succumbs to a disability, so we urge the General Assembly to:**

- **Restore the protection for people with mental illness on Medicaid/SAGA who are stable on psychiatric medications;**
- **Reject co-pays of \$3.00 on certain medical services and prescription co-pays of up to \$20.00 on certain individuals enrolled in Medicaid; and**
- **Reject the proposal to increase from \$15.00 to \$20.00 (per month) the newly imposed co-pays on prescriptions for people enrolled in Medicaid and Medicare Part D.**

At this time of economic strain, we can ill afford missteps such as those proposed in H.B. 5018. Like Connecticut's families, our elected leaders must maximize savings and minimize costly consequences. Ensuring vulnerable populations proper access to medication is one essential step in the right direction.

Thank you for considering this testimony and promoting our state's mental and fiscal health.